T/SOR/49/2/25

THE ART OF ANARCHY

by Flavio Costantini

The Art of Anarchy

It was tempting to put suitably heroic captions to these illustrations. But Constantini's drawings are so wonderfully expressive and evocative that we have decided not to 'gild refined gold, to paint the lily' and left them with their original captions. . . the dry, indifferent or malicious comments of the press and historians which is the way the world came to know of the deeds here portrayed. . . . . .

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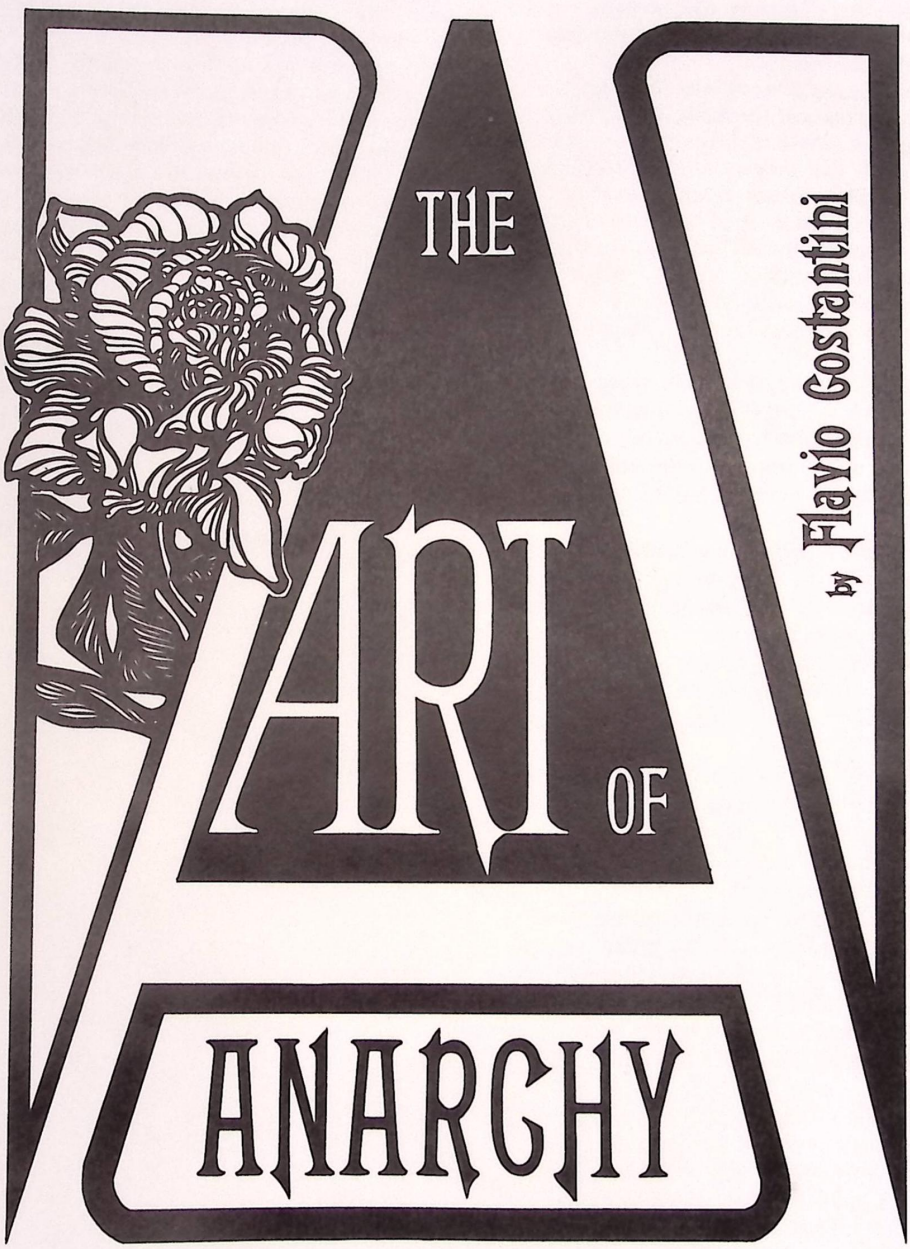
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INTRODUCTION

Throughout history there have been movements of people that suddenly capture the imagination of an oppressed humanity, become enshrined in myth and pass into folklore to inspire generations with their example.

The servants of those who control our destiny, the *professional* historians, would have us believe that all history and human progress is made, not as Tolstoy says by 'the life of humanity', but by the actions and decisions of 'great' men.

No, it is the artist, the writer and the poet who capture the spirit of the decisive moments of history and, perhaps, contribute to giving life and perspective to the myth and, possibly, making it more inspiring than reality.

Usually these movements are subversive of the existing order. Consequently the servants of the State seek to label them as part of a conspiracy – such is their arrogance and contempt of those they rule that they cannot bear to think they are not respected for their virtues. When those they oppress turn against them it is the work of 'some small group of troublemakers and enemies of society' working for their own particular evil ends. The continued existence of their class demands that they stifle all sparks of resistance with the ashes of apathy the sand of a supposed united class interest – fascism!

The hysterical campaigns of hate, repression, torture and murder which the ruling class unleashes when such movements swell and gather momentum demonstrates only too clearly that the ordinary men and women thrown to the fore in such situations are not isolated lunatics but the harbingers of the coming spring.

Sometimes these movements, although initially revolutionary, are successfully absorbed into the system as was the case with the early Christians and their myths of the saviour cult – a simple and impossible dream of salvation – beyond the tomb! The assimilation of Christianity by the Roman Empire achieved the intended effect of destroying the slave empire, but it also lingered on to become the faith and ideology of new and more subtle tyrannies.

Not all such movements suffer this fate. The quality of the martyrs and the value of their ideas is such that the message can never be destroyed by assimilation into the system – even if their watchwords and banners are seized by the enemy.

The heroic period which forms the basis of Flavio Costantini's work was the first great spark of working class resistance to the State which, supported by ascendant capitalism, was in the process of destroying the artisan class with its spirit of independence and herding it into the factories of Europe. This period was marked politically by the Paris Commune of Cartagena (August 12th 1873 to January 1874) in Spain.

By the vicious suppression of such attempts at a new world by the bourgeoisie these men and women were galvanised into a specific movement whose backlash against State repression shocked a public opinion which had been manipulated (and is to this day) by the media of the ruling class – not because of the degree of violence (it could never compare with the mass repression, wars, torture, murders and miseries inflicted by the bourgeoisie, or the indiscriminate attacks of chauvinist nationalism, in actual violence) but because of the facility with which it *discriminated* and singled out the guilty men of State.

It is the incidents of this struggle against oppression that Flavio Costantini dwells upon. He recognises the validity of the anarchist tradition that made up a specific movement, and which – despite its frequent failure to build up a viable organisation – can nevertheless be distinguished from any imitation that from time to time might masquerade as the real thing.

Costantini sees the struggle of the IWW in the context of anarcho-syndicalism; he understands which labour struggles are valid in his overall theme.

One can afford to smile at the libertarian art critic who rejected Flavio's illustrations out of hand, at the exhibition of his work in London, because of what he believed to be a preoccupation with criminal violence, and singled out the instance of Ravachol whom he regarded as the most despicable of all – 'a grave robber', no less. In a subsequent article the same critic eulogised and excused the Chinese Government for exhibiting the exhumed relics of China's Imperial past, for these treasures 'belonged to the world'. It was reasonable for a Government to rob graves for their own greater glory but not for their opponents to do the same in order to obtain the necessary funds to destroy their class enemies.

To understand Costantini's work one must understand that his real preoccupation is with the class-struggle – and too often, alas, in combatting the repression, misery and class justice of the State, this has had to be violent. It is these actions which form the warp and weft of revolutionary anarchism. The incidents he depicts are part of a long odyssey towards freedom. He is weaving a Bayeux Tapestry of the Anarchist Revolution. In his tapestry devoted to the conquest of bread and freedom he takes us through the peak hours of hope and despair of the anarchist movement. . . the moments that formulated a faith and which decisively marked off libertarian socialism from reformist and authoritarian socialism – each showing in its own way that without freedom there would be no equality and without equality no freedom, and without struggle there would be neither.

Stuart Christie
London.

May 1st is the international workers day, commemorated since the struggles of the labour movement in Chicago, and the day of the 'red flag'.

November 11th – remembering the day in 1886 when the Chicago Martyrs were hanged – is the day of the black flag, and was observed from 1886 to 1919 as Anarchist Day. State and parliamentary socialism moved in on May 1st and sought to appropriate it. November 11th was the day on which the First World War ended and from then until recently was observed as Armistice Day.

The anarcho-syndicalist colours are black and red - red for working class organisation and black for anarchism. Its appropriate day is July 19th 1936 with the brief summer of the anarcho-syndicalist workers of Spain.

1. *Gibellina, January 1st 1894*

A crowd of peasants and workers, with women and children among them, stormed the town hall at Gibellina in protest against the taxes and the town dues. Troops opened fire twice, killing thirteen people and wounding about thirty.

2. *Naples, November 17th 1878*

While driving along the Via Toledo, Umberto I was stabbed in the right arm by the anarchist Giovanni Passanante, who shouted to him 'My bosses have always treated me as scum. Death to the king. Long live the universal republic!' Minister Cairoli, who used his body as a shield to protect the king, was wounded in the right leg.

3. *St. Petersburg, March 13th 1881*

While returning to his palace along the Catherine Canal the Tsar's closed carriage was hit by a bomb thrown by the terrorist Rysakoff (of Narodnaya Volya – the People's Will) Alexander II stepped out safely, but a second terrorist, Grinieivetsky, threw another bomb between himself and the Tsar, killing both of them.

4. *Paris, March 28th 1892*

Ravachol, alias Leon Leger, anarchist expropriator and dynamiter, was arrested in Paris at the Very Restaurant, 22 Boulevard Magenta, for having blown up the homes of Benoit, the judge of the Supreme Court of Appeal, and Balot, the deputy prosecutor of the republic. Sentenced to death by the tribunal for the murder of a rich beggar, the hermit of Chambles, he climbed the scaffold singing at the top of his voice the anti-clerical song 'Pere Duchene'.

5. *Lyon, May 24th 1894*

In the Rue de la Republique Italian anarchist Santo Jeronimo Caserio stabbed President Carnot through the heart shouting 'Long Live Anarchy'. Condemned to death, Caserio was guillotined on August 15th of the same year.

6. *Monza, July 24th 1900*

As he left a gymnastic display organised by the society of 'Forti e Liberi' Umberto I was hit by two revolver shots fired by anarchist Gaetano Bresci, who had come from Patterson USA, with the express purpose of avenging the Milan massacres of 1898. Wounded in the neck and shoulder blades, the king died shortly after. Bresci, condemned to convict prison, was found strangled in circumstances which remain obscure, in cell no. 515 of Santo Stefano prison on May 22nd 1901.

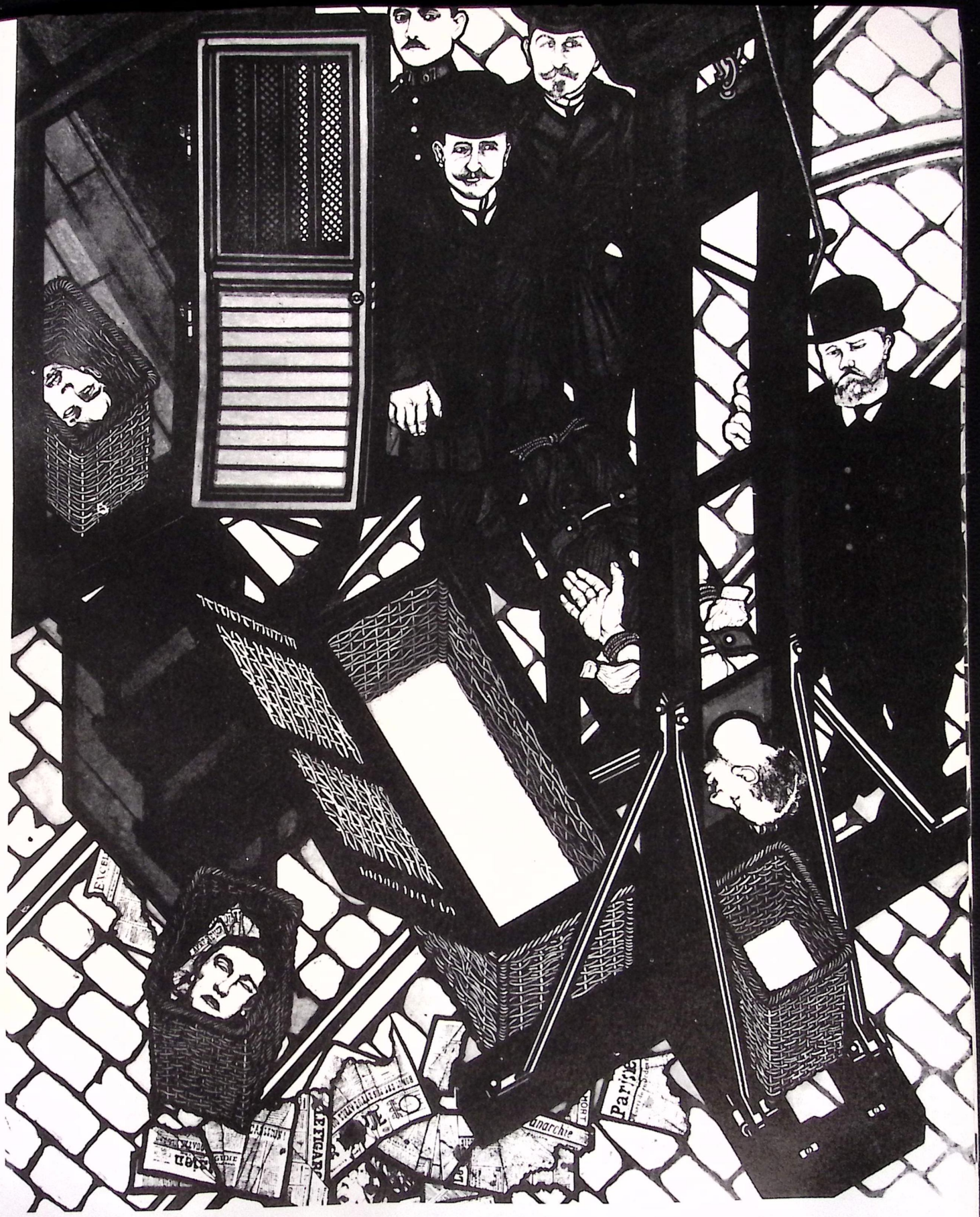
7. Monza, July 24th 1900

8. *Paris, October 1st 1901: The Night Workers (I)*

Alexandre Jacob, anarchist burglar, with two of the forty members of his group, broke into a jewellers in the rue Quincampoix in broad daylight on Sunday by means of an umbrella and a hole drilled through the floor. They made their getaway undisturbed with one hundred and thirty thousand francs worth of jewellery. The proceeds of the job were to finance the anarchist movement. After his arrest in Abbeville in 1904 Jacob was sentenced to forced labour for life and transported to Guiana. Freed in 1929, he committed suicide in 1954 at the age of seventy-five.

9. *Nogent-sur-Marns, May 14th-15th 1912: The Tragic Bandits (I)*

The anarchist outlaws Garnier and Valet, barricaded in a hut and armed with Brownings, held out for nine hours against hundreds of police, Zouaves and republican guards.



10. *Paris, April 10th 1913: The Tragic Bandits (II)*

Three anarchist outlaws were guillotined in Paris. Soudy, the youngest, the first at the guillotine, said 'I am trembling, but like Mayor Bailly it's from the cold.' Callemin smiled and cried 'It is a fine thing, itsn't it, a man's agony.' Monier, the last, took his leave by saying 'Farewell to you all, gentlemen and to society also.'

11. *Barcelona, October 13th 1909*

Francisco Ferrer, a libertarian Catalonian teacher, was accused without evidence, of incitement during the general strike. Arrested and sentenced to death, he was shot in the moat of Montjuich fortress.

12. *Ukraine, 1919-1921*

Nestor Makhno, Ukrainian anarchist guerrilla, after defeating the white armies of Denikin and Wrangel was then treacherously attacked by his Bolshevik allies in an unequal struggle which was to last for more than ten months.

13. *Saint-Jean Bonnefonds, May 14th-15th 1891*

Learning from comrades that Baroness Rochetaillee had been buried with her jewellery, one stormy night Ravachol scaled the cemetery wall, raised the tombstone, which weighed one hundred and fifty kilos, slipped down into the sepulchre, moved another boulder weighing one hundred and twenty kilos, tore off the oak lid of the coffin which was held in place by three iron bands, broke the lead casing to find only a wooden cross with the corpse.

14. *Chicago, May 3rd 1886*

Towards the end of the afternoon of May 3rd about 8000 strikers gathered at the exit of the MacCormick agricultural machine factory to taunt the scabs; they were greeted by revolver rifle shots from the police and the Pinkerton agents; forced to retreat they left six dead and fifty wounded.

15. *Bartolomeo Vanzetti and Nicola Sacco*

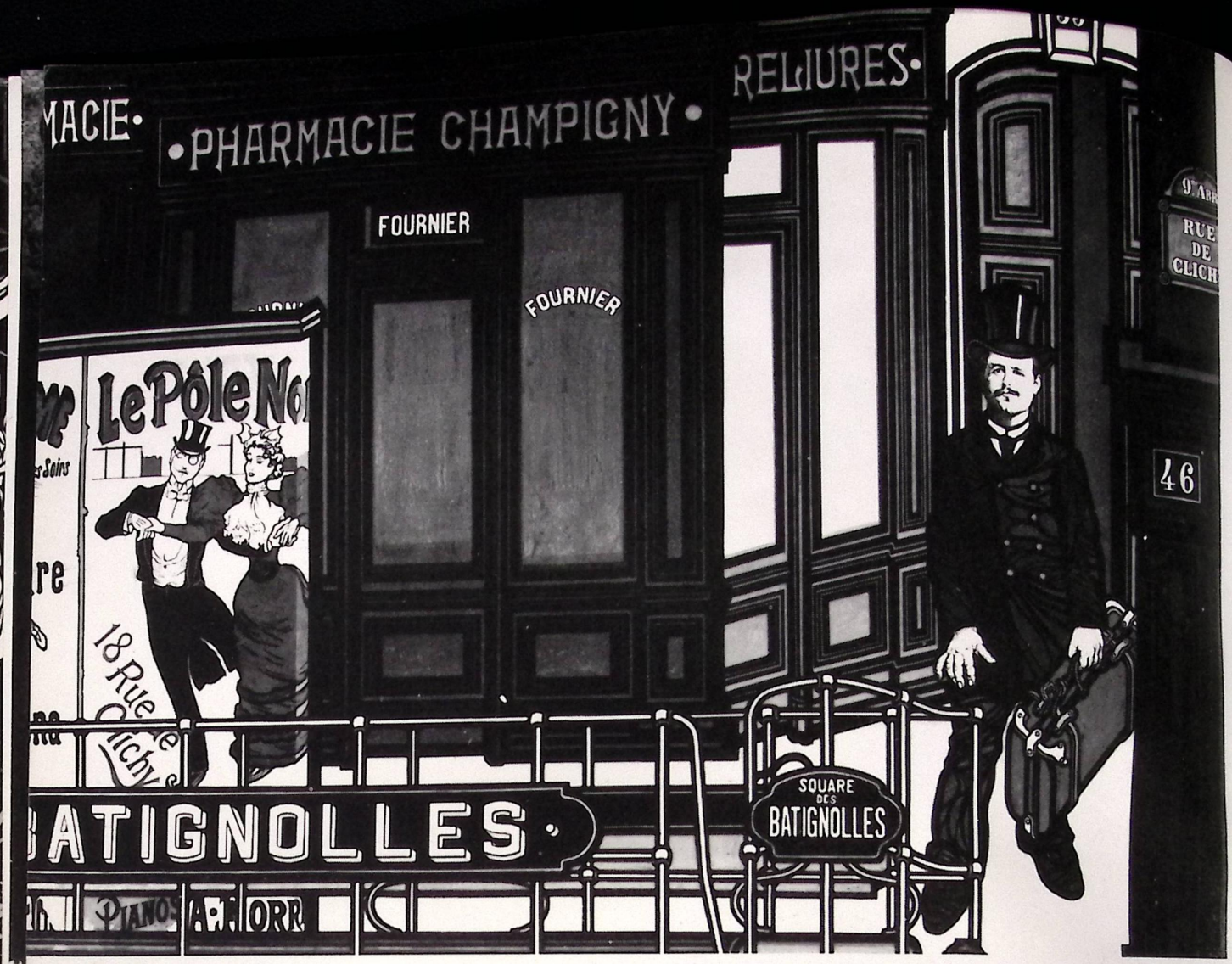
16. *Mikhail Bakunin*

17. *La Cote (St. Etienne district) March 25th 1891*

Ravachol ransacked the house of two elderly spinsters, Louise and Jenny Loy, and then tried to set fire to it. 'Before leaving he arranged two fires; one of which was in the dining room where he piled the chairs on top of each other and soaked them with paraffin'. (P. Bouchardon. *Ravachol et Cie,* p50)

18. *Geneva, September 10th 1898*

On the Mont Blanc platform Luigi Luchene, an anarchist building labourer from Italy, killed the Austrian Empress Elizabeth by stabbing her through the heart with a triangular file.

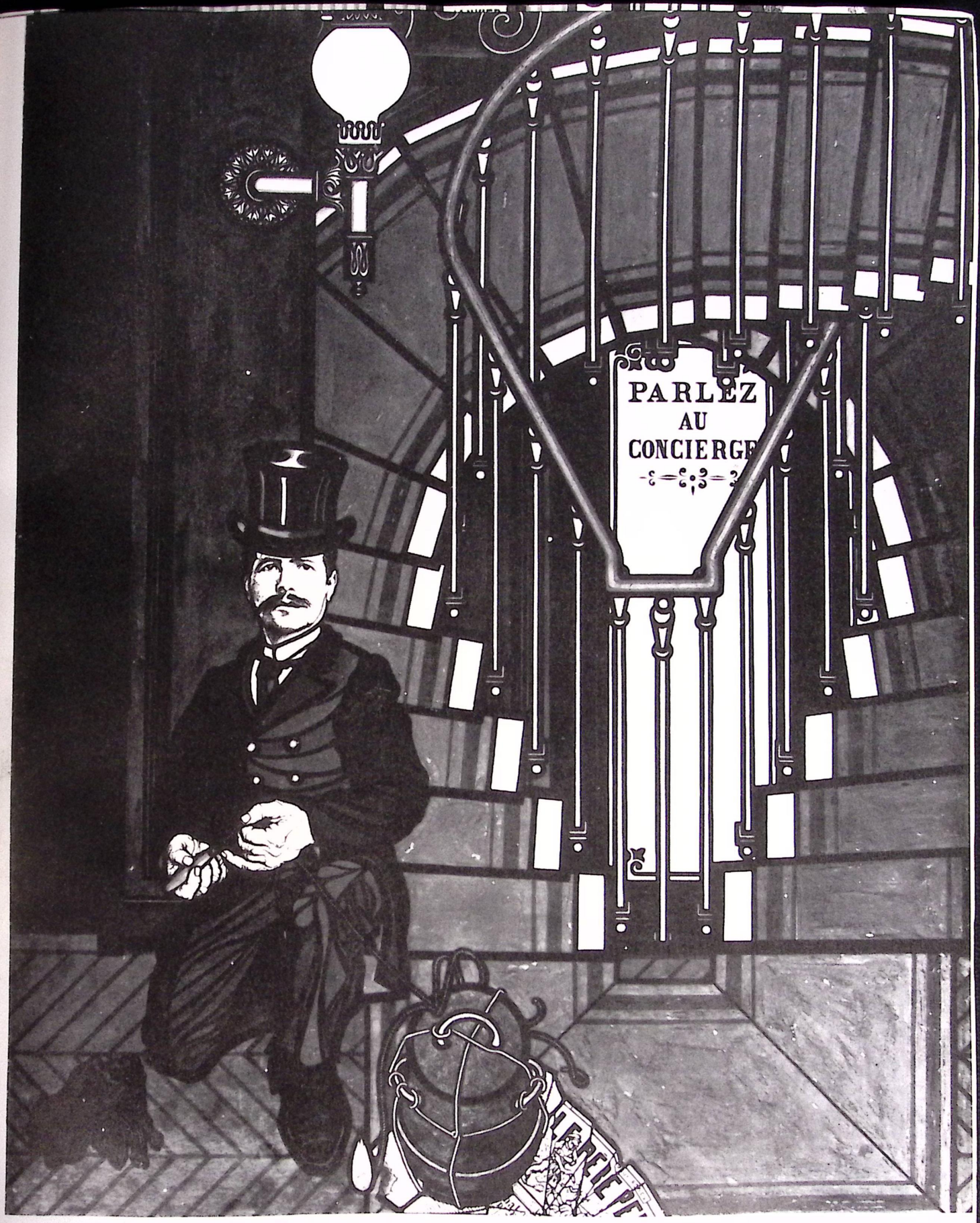


19. *Paris, March 17th 1892*

On the second floor of 39 Rue de Clichy, Ravachol placed a small suitcase. In the building lived Bulot, the deputy public prosecutor of the Republic. There were five wounded and there was considerable damage.

'I have done this' he stated, 'first because M. Benoit passed an unfair sentence on Decamp and friends. The jury asked for the minimum sentence, he gave the maximum. Second because there has been no publicity over the ill-treatment they received at the Clichy police station. It is for these reasons that I have especially marked out M. Benoit and Bulot, but I warn all those who have the responsibility of meting out justice to be more clement if they want better treatment themselves.'

(Varennes, *de Ravachol a Caserio*, pp 17-18).



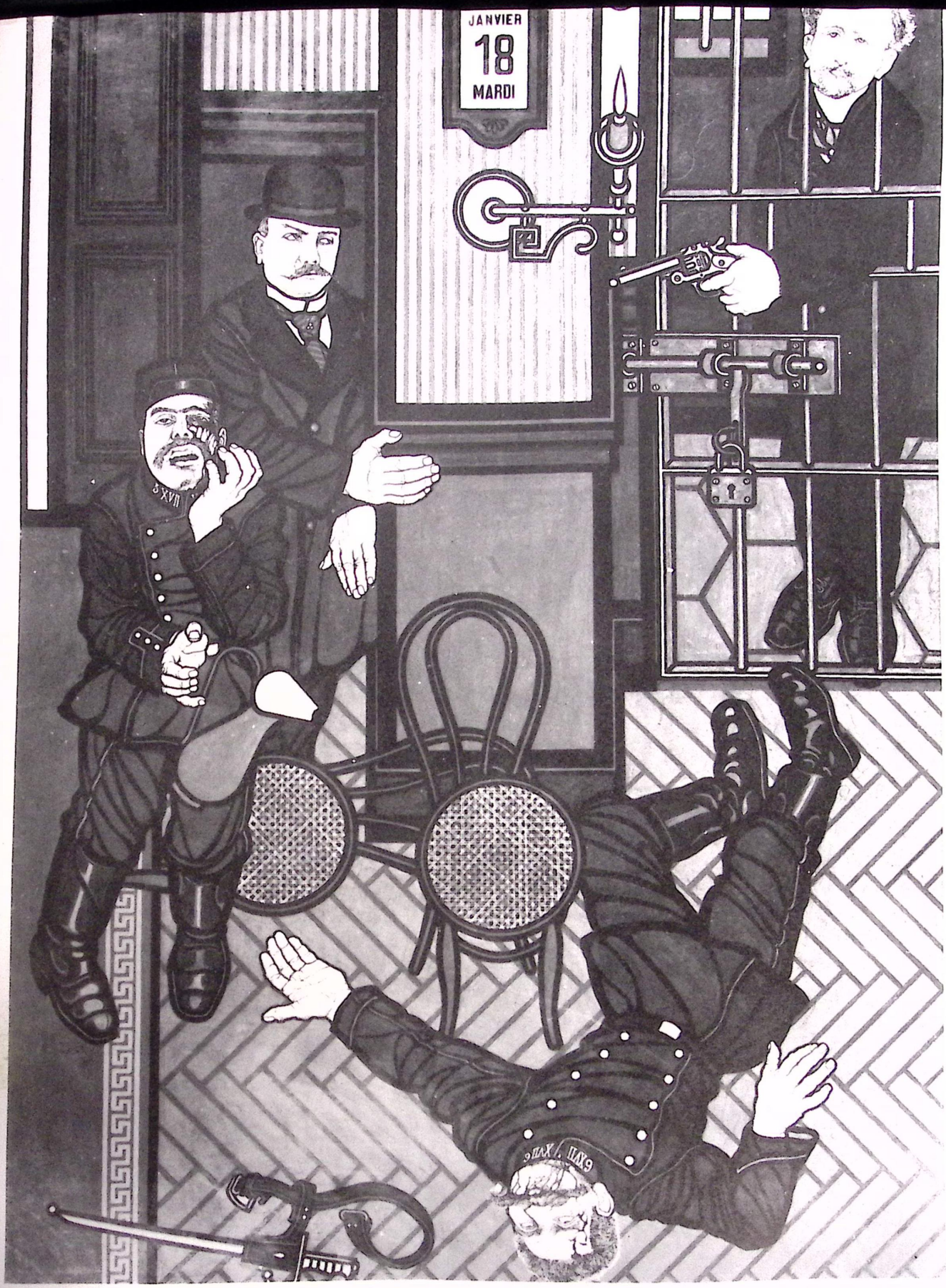
20. *Paris, March 11th 1892*

On the first floor of no. 136 Boulevard Saint-Germain, Ravachol placed a bomb made of a smelting pot and wrapped in a newspaper. In the building lived Edouard Benoit, the judge of the Supreme Court of Appeal. There was much damage but nobody hurt.

21. *Sain Etienne, 1890*

Ravachol, under the name of Sabot, rented a room at no. 27 Rue d'Annonay, where he lived with Madelaine Labret, the wife of Ruhlieres, a braid worker twenty years her senior. 'I understand that this woman was unhappy with her husband, who never talked to her, and who, because of the difference in their ages, had a personality very different from hers, his being introverted and coarse, hers being outward going and very affectionate.'

(Les Memoirs de Ravachol – from *Ravachol et les Anarchistes,* by Jean Maitron. p60).



22. *Paris, January 18th 1898*

Outside the police station on the Rue Berselius, Claude-Francois Etievant, anarchist printer, stabbed orderly Renard twenty times; seized and locked up without being searched, he took out his revolver and wounded policeman Le Breton in the cheek. Commissioner Rouffaud managed to persuade him to throw out his weapon. Condemned to forced labour for life, he died at Maroni, Guiana.

'No-one has suffered as much as he, and death must have seemed the only possible way of liberation.' (Duval, *Memorie* p889).

23. Santa-Agueda, August 8th 1897

In the long hall on the ground floor of the spa establishment, Michele Angiolillo, an anarchist printer from Foggia, fired three revolver shots and mortally wounded Antonio Canovas del Castillo, president of the Cabinet of ministers, the Spanish conservative party leader.

24. *Vergara, August 20th 1897*

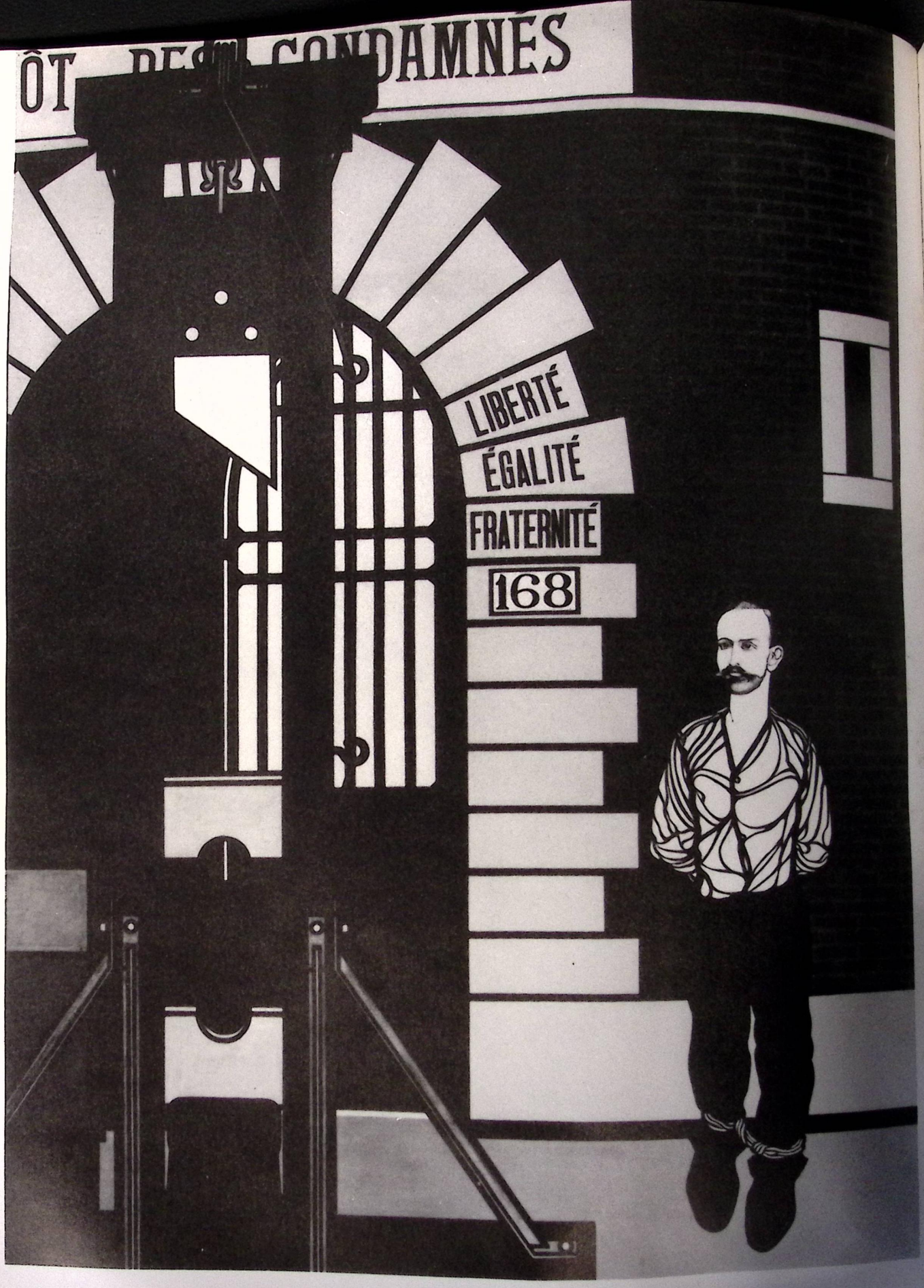
Michele Angiolillo refused the last sacraments and was garrotted in the prison yard. 'Then that smile of his full of light, life and dawn, expired there on the horrifying garrote: GERMINAL!' (Borgi, *Malatesta*, p120).

25. *Paris, February 12th 1894*

In the cafe Terminus on the rue St Lazare, Émile Henry, an anarchist student, threw a home made bomb into the crowd of petty bourgeois busy drinking beer and listening to the orchestra playing 'Marthe' by Flotow. Seventeen people were hurt. 'This pretentious and stupid crowd of employees, earning from 300 to 500 francs a month, more reactionary than their bourgeois masters. . . (*Crapouillot*, January 1938 p25).

26. *Paris, February 12th 1894*

On the corner of the rue de l'Isly and the rue de Rome, Emile Henry, having wounded three pursuers, found his way barred by policeman Francois Poisson's raised sabre. Henry shot and wounded him in the chest with the last two bullets in his revolver. He was at last overcome by two other policemen.



27. *Paris, February 5th 1894*

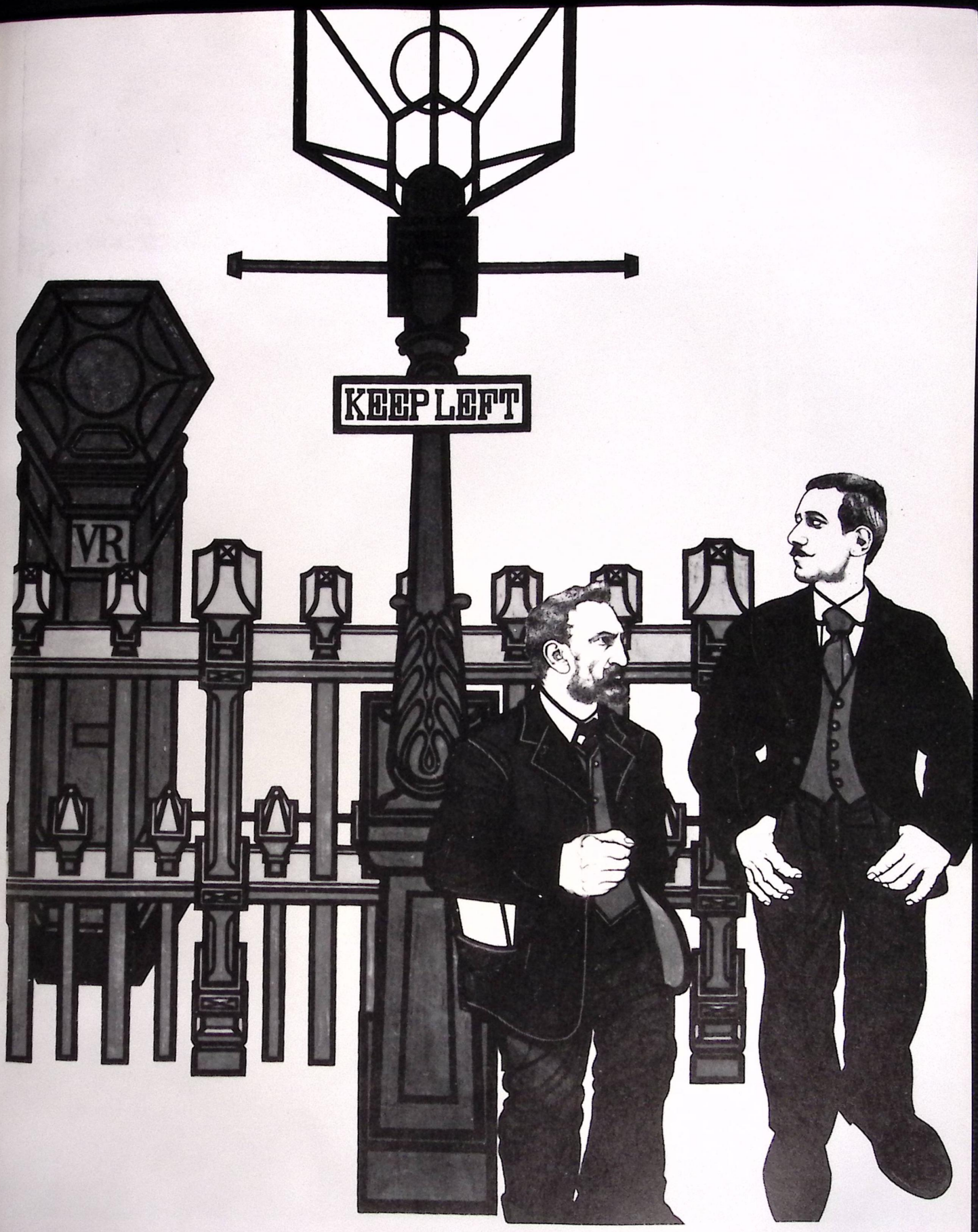
Place de la Roquette, Auguste Vaillant was guillotined. 'He died bravely, simply, as calm before the guillotine as he had been before the jury. 'Long live anarchy! My death will be avenged' he cried when brought from his cell. And at the foot of the scaffold, in a resounding voice, he said these few words, 'Death to bourgeois society and long live anarchy.' ' (Varennes, *op. cit.* p 108).

28. *Paris, 25th March 1912*

A member of the Bonnot Gang.

29. *Paris, December 9th 1893*

Auguste Vaillant threw a nail bomb from the second row of the public gallery in the Palais Bourbon into the chamber: twenty deputies were slightly injured. 'What matter the victims if the gesture is a fine one.' (Laurent Tailhade).



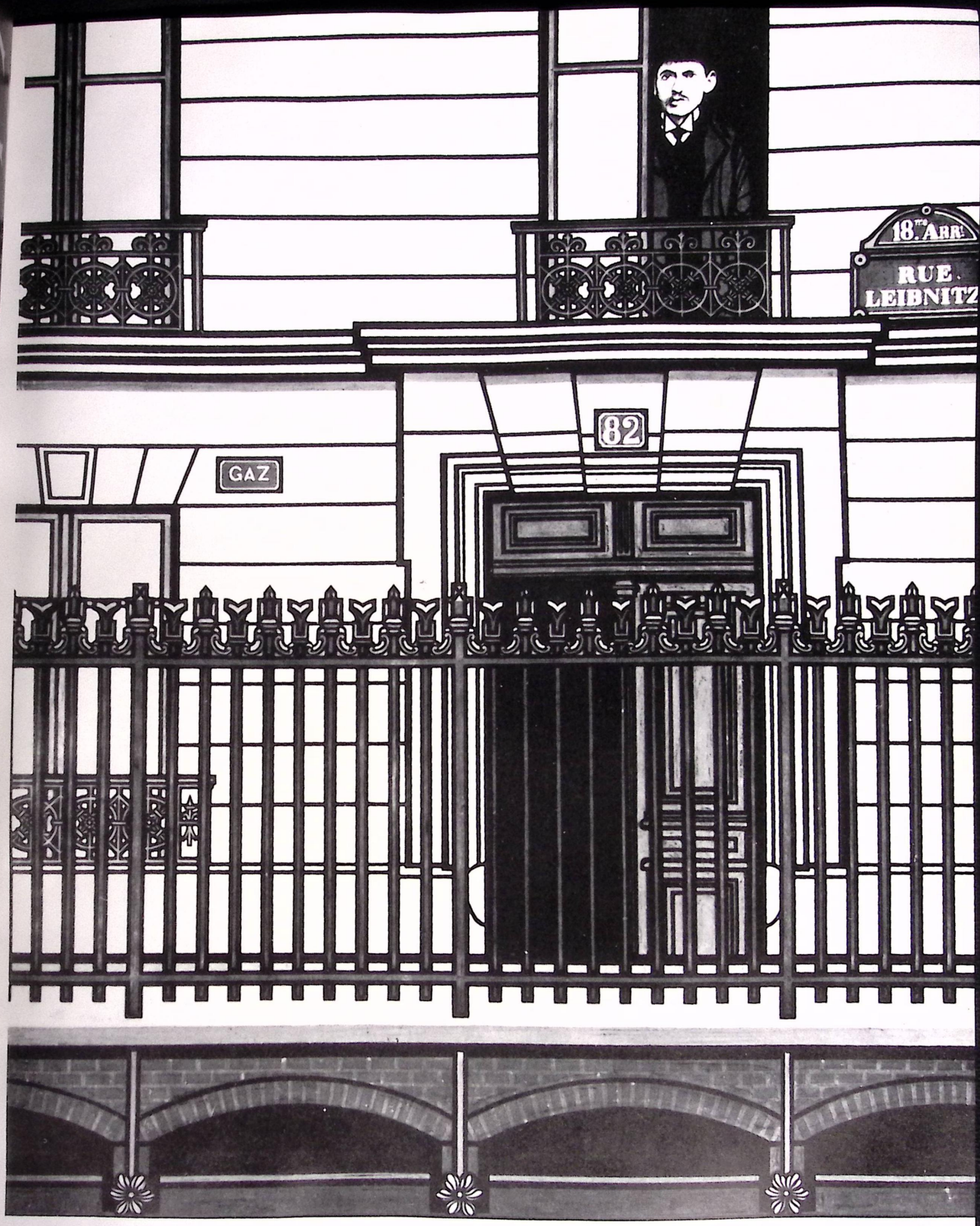
30. *London, July 1896*

At the congress of the Second International, Errico Malatesta and Michele Angiolillo met and became firm and last friends. '. . . it was certainly in these meetings that the friendship between Malatesta and Angiolillo became strained; Angiolillo at the end of that year went from Brussels to London and worked as a typesetter at the Wertheimer and Leo printers'. (Borghi, *Malatesta,* p122 footnote).

31. *Albert Libertad*

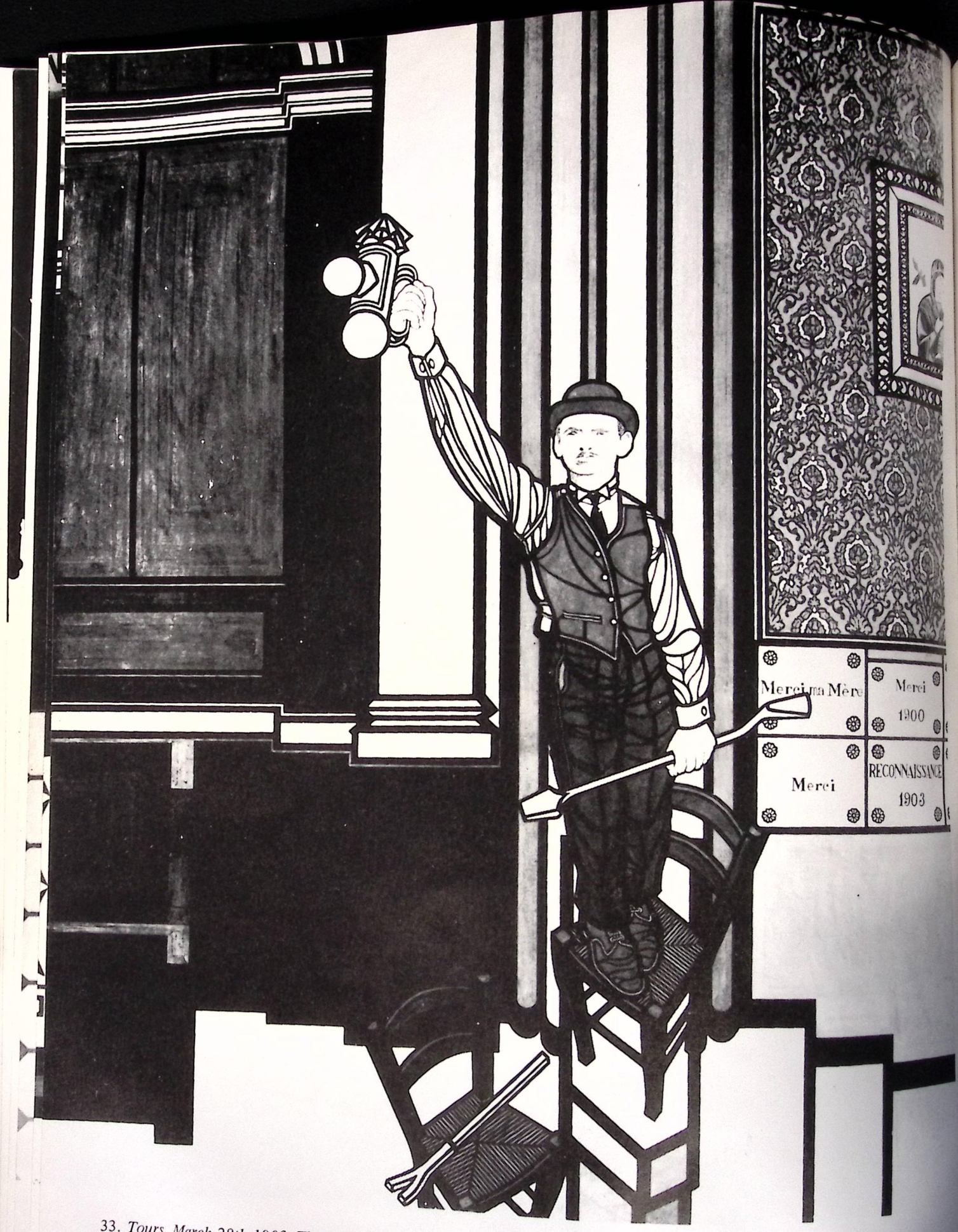
He wore a long black overall with voluminous sleeves, and over this wretched body his head stuck out proudly; always hatless and with a Socratic brow and a head bald and dented with wisdom, around which hung a few long tufts of hair, like stubborn thorns. But his eyes burnt with a fierce rebelliousness and his mouth was twisted with bitter jibes.' (A. Colomer, *A nous deux Patrie*).

Besides his paper *L'Anarchie*, Libertad was active in an organisation called 'People's discussion' where there were feverish disputes on all the anarchist theories, or supposed such. The paper was strange and pugnacious. It was compiled as a group venture at the rue du Chevalier-de-la-Barre on a make-shift press. (A. Croix in *Crapouillot* January, 1938 p34).



32. *Paris, December 1902: The Night Workers (II)*

'. . . he removed the rest after a few weeks and went to live in the rue Leibnitz, no. 82. . . ' (B. Thomas, *Jacob*, p206).



33. *Tours, March 28th 1903: The Night Workers (III)*

'. . . Then he noticed the fine heavy 17th century Aubusson tapestries which hung on the walls. . . ' (B. Thomas, *Jacob* p125).

'The furnishings of the cathedral are poor and of little interest. Some fine 17th century tapestries were stolen in 1903.' (F. Salet, *La Cathedrale de Tours* p78).

34. *Milan, December 15th 1869*

'Aldo Palumbo, journalist of the Milan "Unita" was taking the first steps across the courtyard when he heard a thump, and then two more. A body had fallen from above, hit the first cornice of the wall, bounced on the one below and ended up on its shoulders on the ground, half of it on the paving of the courtyard and half on the soft ground of the flower bed.' (La strage di stato, p63).

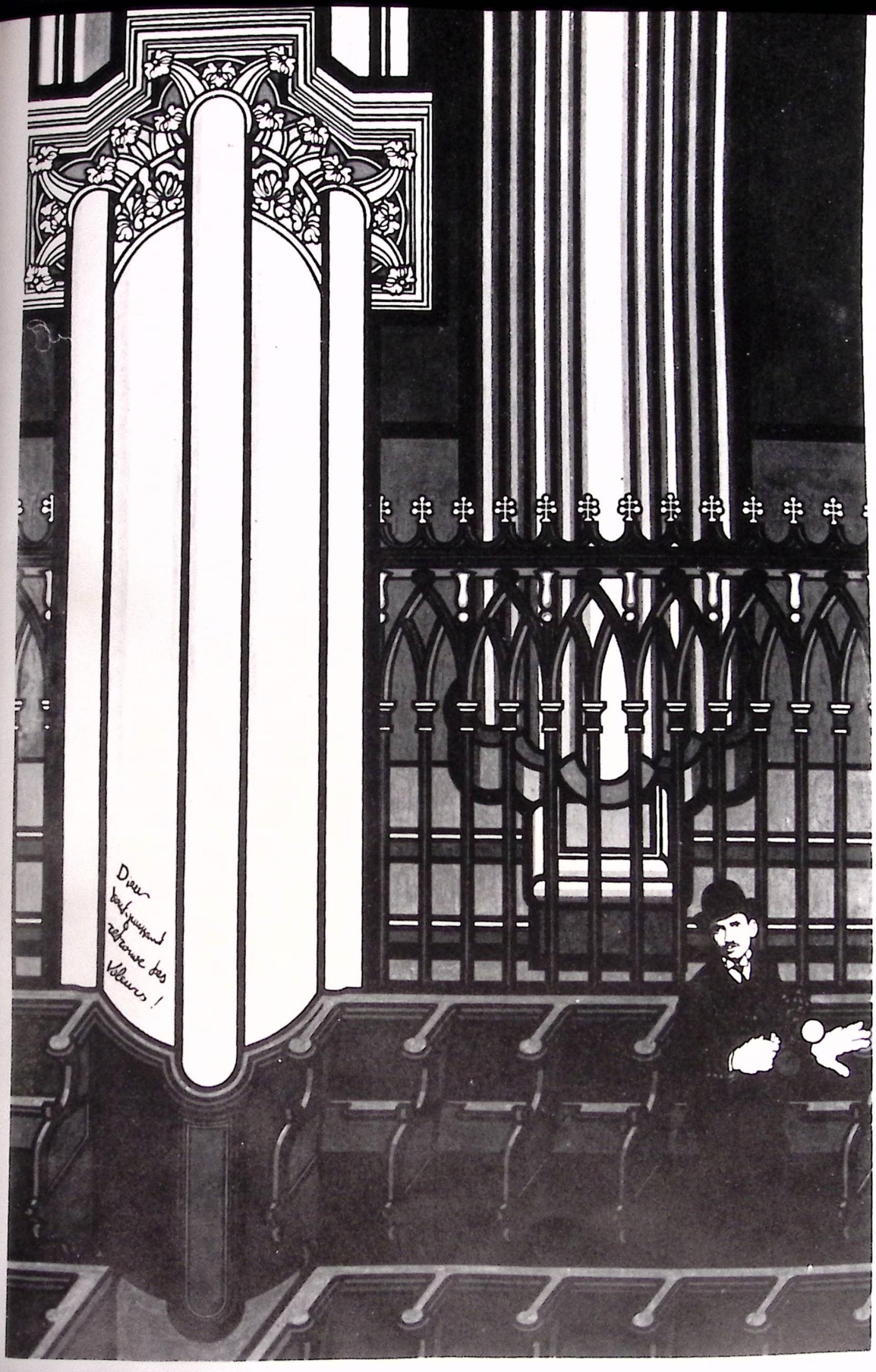
But Pinelli is and always will be a cumbersome corpse. Buried with his black banner he will not leave in peace the living who carried him to the tomb. (Camilla Cederna, *Pinelli,* p16).

Quella sera a Milano era caldo
ma che caldo che caldo faceva
brigadiere apri un po la finestra
una spinta e Pinelli va giu.
(*Ballad of the death of the anarchist Pinelli*).

35. *Tours, March 28th 1903: The Night Workers (IV)*

'During the night of March 27th-28th Alexandre Pelissard and Bour went to Tours where they intended to plunder the cathedral. This was one of the boldest feats they ever accomplished. . . ' (B. Thomas, *Jacob*, p215).

'The layout of the cathedral is that of a Latin cross, consisting of a nave with side aisles, a transept and a chancel with an approaching aisle. . .' (M. Floriscene, Dictionnaire des *Cathedrales de France*, p237).



36. *Tours, March 28th 1903: The Night Workers (V)*
'. . . Just as he was about to leave he suddenly turned back. He took a piece of charcoal from his pocket and wrote on one of the pillars in large letters "Omnipotent God, find your thieves" '. (Guilleminault-Mahe, *L'Epopee de la revolte*, p152).
'. . . The pillars are of uniform design, cylindrical pieces of masonry flanked by four columns branching out half way up into smaller columns which reach up to the vaulted roof. . .' (F. Salet, *op. cit*, p27).

37. *Paris, October 1st 1901: The Night Workers (VI)*

'By ten past three Jacob and Clarenson were again on the fifth floor. The rope ladder was coiled up. Everything was in its place. Their clothes brushed and carrying their suitcases they went past the caretaker calmly and left, never to return.' (B. Thomas, *Jacob*, p177).

'. . . In the maze of backstreets near the rue St. Martin there lived the "ladies of easy virtue", and the "women of ill repute". They had lived there in the 14th century and would be living there still in the 20th. Rue Quincampoix, rue des Lombards, rue aux Ours, the goldsmiths, the pawnbrokers and the chemists attracted almost as many customers. . .' (P. Boussel, *Crapouillot del Luglio*, 1962 p64).

38. *London, January 3rd 1911*

'In London some housebreakers hiding out in an attic, held up to ridicule the entire British police force. It took 700 men plus artillery to resolve matters. Just as the housebreakers were about to be taken they set fire to the house and perished in the flames'. (A. Croix, *Crapouillot del Gennaie 1938* p36).

'In January 1911 Mr Winston Churchill, then Home Secretary, was personally involved in an incident. . . known as "The Siege of Sidney Street. . ." ' (*Illustrated London News,* An eightieth year tribute to Winston Churchill, statesman, historian, sportsman, soldier and orator, 1954).

'. . . and a nearby hoarding announces "Dick Whittington" as the current pantomime'. (J.E. Holroyd, *The Gaslight Murders, p69).*

39. *Paris, March 11th 1913*

'On March 11th Lacombe was arrested at the fair on the boulevard de la Villette as he was meditating outside a wrestling booth.' (J. Maitron, *Histoire du mouvement anarchiste en France*, p405).

'. . . the miner Lacombe, who had "done in" a bookseller who was also a police spy, in the Clichy passage; he let himself be arrested at the fair without resistance and managed to commit suicide in the Sante prison.' (V. Serge, *Memorie di un rivoluzionaire, p63).*

40. *Rome, September 11th 1926*

'Il Questore di Roma on record for 11/9/1926, number 106894 records that at about 10 o'clock on that day, on the small square of the Porte Pia, in the south east approach as the President was returning from Villa Torlonia, an unknown assailant suddenly threw a bomb at the car without hitting it.' *(Central State Archive – political section on Gino Lucetti).*

'. . . Bisogna finirla!' (Mussolini speech after the third attempt on his life. Rome September 11th 1926).

'Lucetti, Gino. Italian anarchist 1900-1943. Militant anarchist who emigrated to France in 1925, returning to Italy in 1926, on the morning of 11th April made an attempt on the life of Benito Mussolini.' *(Enciclopedia Universale Rizzoli – Larousse).*

41. *Paris, April 7th 1912: The Tragic Bandits (III)*

(The Bonnot Gang was referred to by the Press as 'Les bandits tragiques' – signifying not so much 'tragic' as 'dramatic' in the theatrical sense).

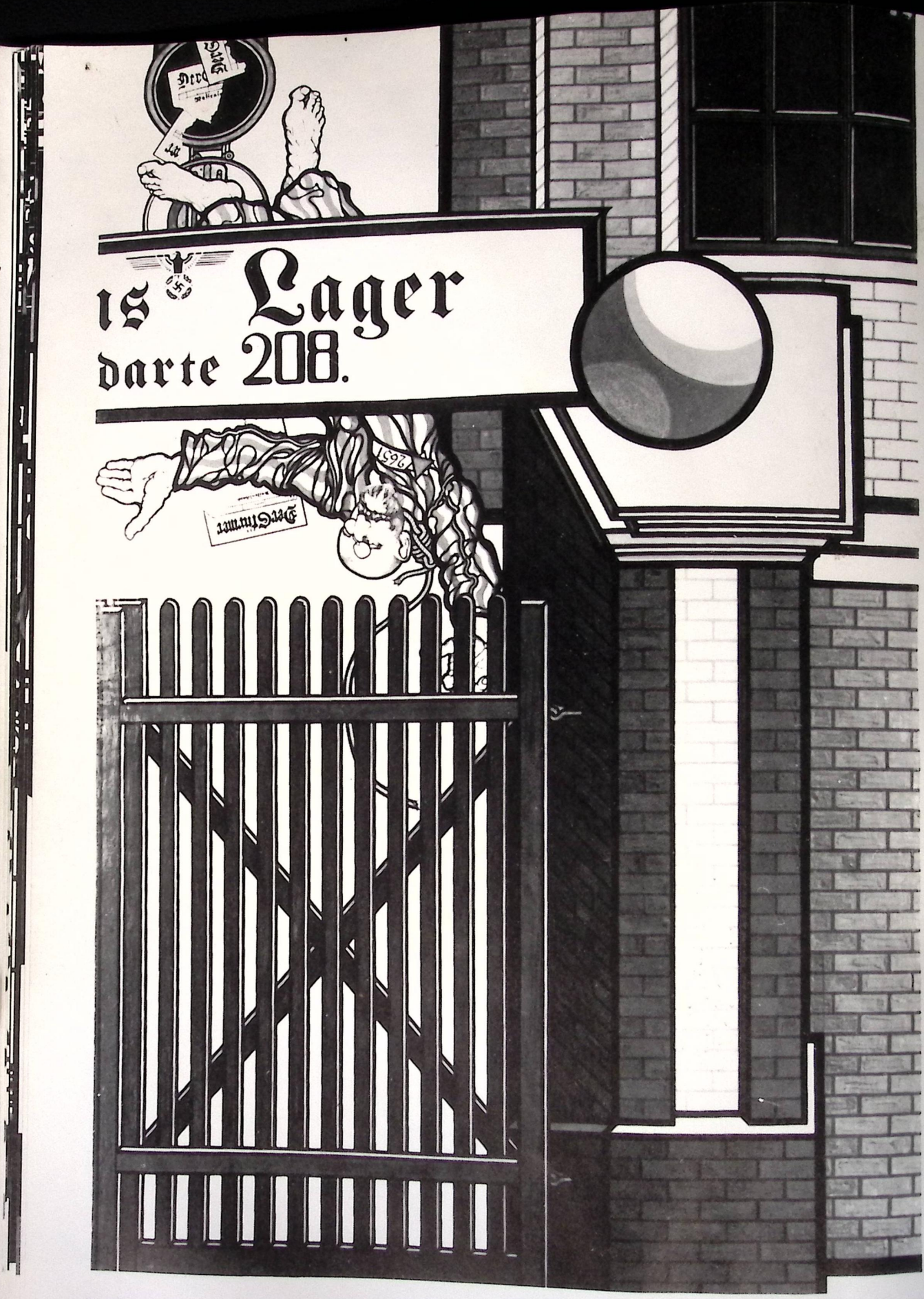
'The capture of Callemin, known as Raymond-la-Science took place some days after Sunday 7th April. Callemin hid with friends in a house at No. 8 rue de la Tour d'Auvergne'. (Meric, *Les Bandits Tragiques,* p61-62).

'. . . Rue de la Tour Auvergne, next door to a wine merchant trading as "Bois san soif" '. (Le Roi, *La Bande a Bonnot,* p187).

' . . . 7th April. . . arrest of Callemin, known as "Raymond-la-Science", Pierre Jourdain, known as Imbart, and of his mistress, Louse Clement, 48 rue de la Tour d'Auvergne. . . ' (*Le Temps,* 18th May 1912).

42. *Paris, 5th October 1901: The Night Workers (VII)*

'Part of the night was devoted to a careful study of the places. But it was impossible to do anything at this hour because of noise.' (B. Thomas, *Jacob*, p176).



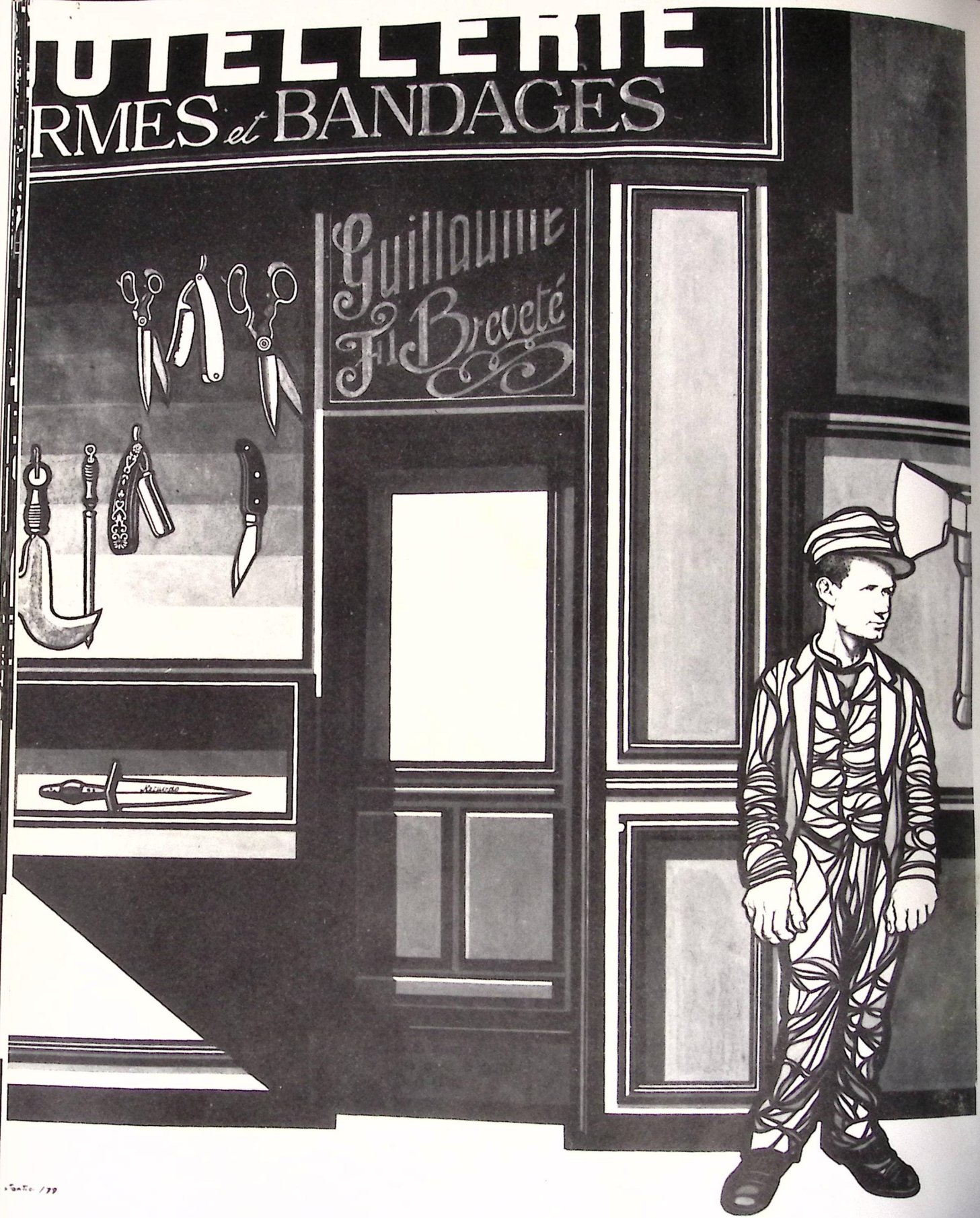
43. *Oranienburg, July 10th 1934/ Erich Muhsam*

'. . . The following morning he (the overseer) went to enquire after M. When no one replied he said cynically – "If he is not here, then he's dead." ' (K. Muhsam).

44. *Petersburg, 14th April 1879*

Alexander Constantine Soloviev makes an attempt on the life of Alexander II, Tsar of all the Russians. Alexander had liberated the serfs, saying 'It is better that this be done from above than forced from below'.

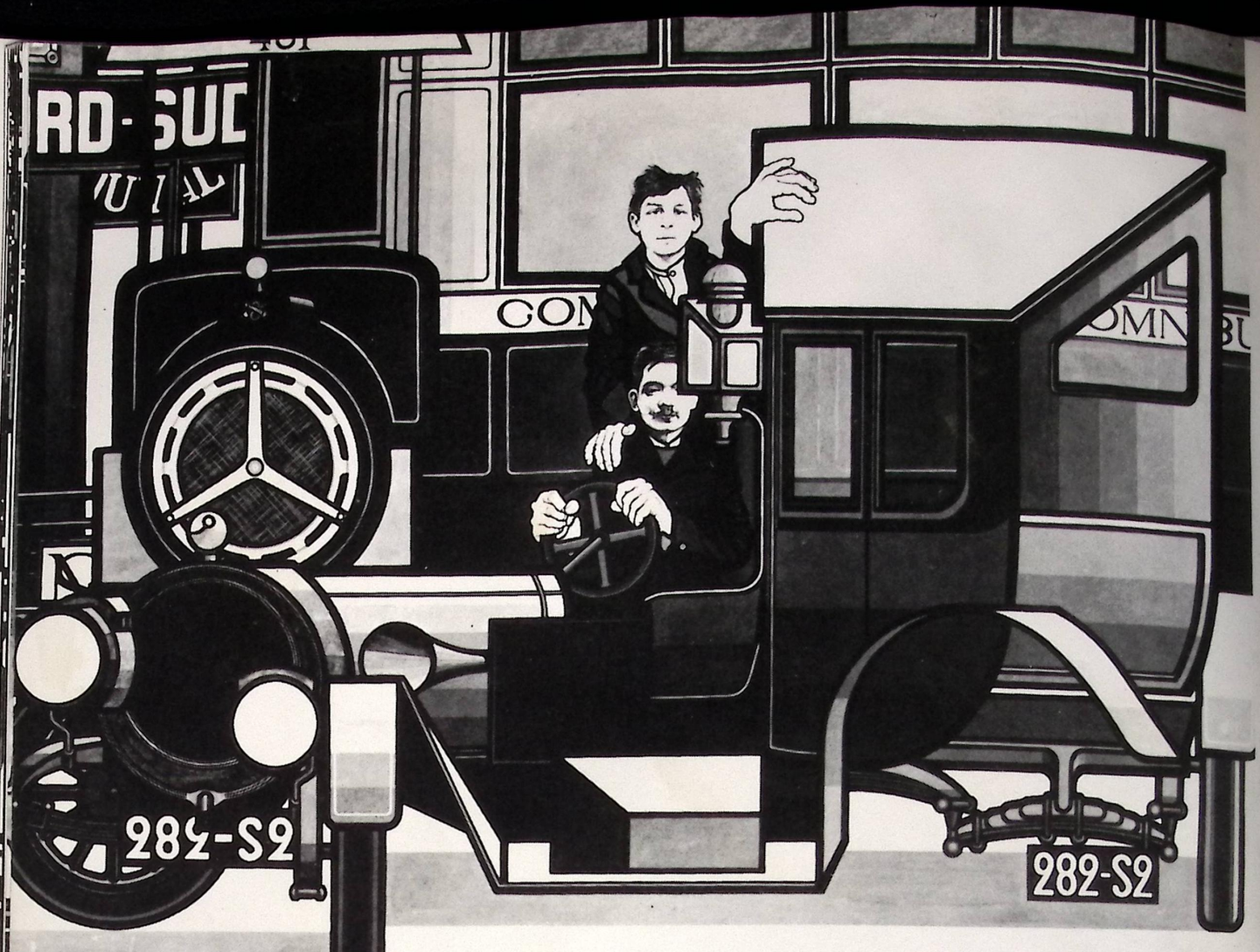
'He spent much of his time in the closely guarded castle of Gatchine, to be safe from Nihilist attempts, several of which he narrowly escaped, finally being killed by Sophia Perovskaya on March 13th 1881.'



45. *Lyon, 1894*

Sante Geronimo Caserio killed President Sadi Carnot of France.

46. *Surete, 30th March 1892*
'Ravachol was taken to the Anthropometrical Department, and when M. Bertillon had taken his measurements he confirmed that they were the same as those taken in 1891 when Ravachol had been arrested. . . for robbery.' (Longini: *Four Patients of Dr. Deibler,* p26).



47. *Paris, 1911*

Jules-Joseph Bonnot behind the wheel of the getaway car with Pierra Jourdain.

HISTORY OF THE BLACK CROSS

ORIGINS

The Anarchist Red Cross started in Tsarist Russia. It was active on two fronts – the organising of aid for political prisoners and deportees, and organising self-defence against political raids by Cossacks. In this latter capacity it helped start Jewish workers' self-defence against pogroms. It was sustained economically by Russian Anarchists in America, particularly in Chicago.

During the Russian civil war, when the Red Cross was active in organising relief, it was thought better to change the name to avoid confusion, and so it became the Anarchist Black Cross.

After the Bolsheviks seized power, the organisation moved to Berlin – still with its main aid Chicago-based – and continued to help Russian prisoners (now of the Soviet Union) with the added task of helping the victims of Italian fascism, and prisoners of the post-war German reaction. Finally when Germany succumbed to fascism, the depression hit America, the decline in the amount of financial aid and the huge wave of people needing that support, broke the back of the organisation. Nevertheless, Chicago remained a source of strength for years up to recent times.

There were other relief organisations set up too, such as the International Anti-Fascist Solidarity (SIA) set up by the CNT (the Spanish anarcho-syndicalists) during the Spanish Civil War, the Mutual Aid for Asian prisoners (Indian and Chinese), and the Orphans Fund (Spain and the World – the British Anarchist paper – children's colony) during the Spanish struggle, and many others similar.

REVIVAL

The revival of the Anarchist Black Cross as such however took place as a result of Stuart Christie's imprisonment in Spain. With the publicity attracted, he received solidarity from a great many countries and shared this with fellow-Anarchist prisoners. As a result of which we found that aid to Spanish prisoners was possible.

It was felt that the then existing facilities for working for Spanish prisoners were inadequate – for years we had been given the impression that nothing could be done for them and the then existing pro-prisoner groups were an active barrier.

When Christie returned, he wanted to aid prisoners in Spain and began to work with Albert Meltzer who for some years past had taken over the Mutual Aid from M.P.T. Acharya in India working for Asian prisoners.

Almost exceptionally, in Spain it was possible to aid prisoners financially (the capitalist system operates in Spanish jails – work, if permitted to do so, or starve! Support your family or friends outside if allowed, or be supported by them – unlike the State socialist system in most prisons– work as directed and eat as provided).

The Black Cross first worked for the release of Miguel Garcia who was near to the end of his sentence (which did not mean automatic liberty), and when he came out, he joined them in London to organise the International Black Cross.

AIMS

The aims of the Black Cross as reconstituted was to provide a 'springboard' effect – get people to work for the release of, and where possible the assistance of, political prisoners and Anarchists in particular – and in turn get inspriation from them in carrying on the struggle.

Help came immediately from many comrades at home and abroad. In particular during the last days of Franco, numerous food parcels went to Spain – these meant a great deal as prisoners were being refused the right to work if they engaged in demonstrations against the regime, which were breaking out throughout the prisons of Spain as the Franco regime was cracking. It meant that they had to get help from the none too affluent families, or starve. The encouragement that the parcels brought or the financial assistance received, meant they had more heart to struggle.

A different form of activity was that involved in the social liaison with Spain. Many young women were breaking with Catholic dominated tradition and becoming liberated; but giving birth to children outside marriage was still a major social disaster for them. A lot of young women were then coming to England, usually London, for abortions, or for contraceptive advice – we couldn't provide either but we could put them in touch with the right sources and help financially where needed (this was the heaviest financial burden of all). For some reason this brought us the stern disapproval of the then so-called feminist movement which was why we couldn't work with it. We were told we were under-writing private medicine and the girls had better wait until the Spanish State put abortion on the National Health Service – which it didn't have even privately.

Also we trained a lot of Spanish friends in the craft of offset litho printing (the late Martin Page, Ted Kavanagh, and Anna Blume helped particularly in this); in later years we managed to send duplicators, Xerox and offset litho machines to the reconstituted Anarchist groups and CNT locals.

INTERNATIONAL GROUPS

It was not our intention to set up Black Cross groups in other countries. Our idea was that we could channel the information to groups about prisoners, concentrated on Spain – at a time when the Anarchist prisoners were still a sizeable proportion – and they could act directly. We hated the idea of becoming a bureaucratic charity in which money goes to upkeep. We resisted that. Other Black Cross groups sprang up in other countries, particularly in Germany and Italy – since then almost everywhere, some with slightly different ideas to our own, others the same.

They have had their problems – major ones too – for the railwayman, Pinelli the secretary of the Black Cross in Milan, was murdered by the police, being flung from a window (which still amuses the bourgeoisie as shown in 'Accidental Death of an Anarchist' – deaths of Statists never do! Georg von Rauch, secretary of the Black Cross in Berlin, was murdered by armed police. But who would believe these people – anarchists – against the word of officers with forty years experience in the force, asked the Berlin police chief, which statement identified them pretty clearly as Nazis.

The greatest satisfaction we had was the release of Goliardo Fiaschi. Released from twenty years imprisonment under Franco he was re-arrested and charged on deportation to his native Italy under an old Fascist conviction. Our intervention apparently brought his release (it happened barely a week after we approached the authorities).

There were a number of other cases where we managed to obtain the release of people either already sentenced or on trial. International protest probably saved the lives of the Murrays, but so far alas they are still in an Irish jail. We were delighted to find that our protest swelled the many protests of others which, with his own heroic stand, secured the release of Black American activist Martin Sostre. Our greatest disappointment was to be able to do nothing for the other Black American anarchist prisoner, Lorenzo Komboa Ervin, still in jail (as far as we know) for his part in resisting the American involvement in Vietnam – ironically the 'war criminal' in US jails for Vietnam. His prison governors locked him up behind a wall of silence as effective as anything in the Iron Curtain.

Prison governors or examining magistrates have been overwhelmed by the response stirred up. When Brenda Christie was arrested on a trumped up charge in Western Germany, the judge protested that he had never been so deluged with complaints from all over the world. The French examining judge in another case – involving Jean Weir and Octavio Alberola – claimed a nervous breakdown as a result of the same 'mistreatment'.

NOW

One offshoot of the Anarchist Black Cross in this country was the transformation of the Bulletin of the ABC *into* Black Flag. *Like the Black Cross, it was intended as a ginger group among what seemed to be the anarchist movement at the time. It had moved into the mainstream despite itself for many reasons. Now the Black Flag Collective and the Anarchist Black Cross are not precisely identical and we haven't got down to working out our 'constitution' – it means most of us who are involved in* Black Flag *have two hats. Most of the Black Cross work is into action rather than administrative, and that's how we like it. With* Black Flag *we faced the fact that many of our readers were asking to join an organisation, so we finally abandoned our stand of being an independent group within the anarchist movement and recommended entry into the Direct Action Movement, the anarcho-syndicalist organisation, which represented the largest and most potent force nationally. (For the benefit of our critics: we didn't take it over nor has it taken us over; but most of our collective are in it and a lot of our readers are members of sympathisers).*

While Black Flag *is produced in London, contributions come in from all over the world as well as Britain. The Anarchist Black Cross exists in all the regions of Britain, North East, North West, Midlands and South East England, Scotland, Wales and North and South of Ireland. The ABC keeps good contact with anarchists around the world, and we exchange* Black Flag *with the many publications from the anarchist press today.* Black Flag *and publications we have gone on to produce are sent free, on request to prisoners anywhere in the world where it can be received.*

Through the pages of Black Flag *and by protests, pickets, petitions, etc. we go on struggling for the freedom of class war prisoners, and encouraging anarchists to organise. Currently we are trying, along with many others to save the life of K. Omori, a Japanese comrade facing the death penalty in Japan.*

WHAT CAN I DO?

Anarchist prisonrs need support, get in touch with us if you want to contact the local Black Cross group in your region, and we'll put you in touch. Publicity for prisoner's situations, fund-raising, writing solidarity and protest letters all need to be done. You cannot forget the comrades in jail. Just because the walls divide us the struggle is not over. In the end it is an Anarchist goal to abolish the prison system and its creator the State.

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